

San Bernardino County Sun

SoCal plans for influx of 6 million residents

By JANET HARP

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Tuesday, June 29, 2004 - RIVERSIDE - A regional plan to accommodate 6 million new residents within 25 years calls for eased traffic, more jobs, redevelopment of dense areas and improved air quality.

"The Compass Vision,' a two-year plan from the six-county Southern California Association of Governments focuses on preparing for a large influx of residents by 2030.

"We wanted a plan where our quality of life would be improved in a fundamental way,' said SCAG member Susan Lien Longville, a San Bernardino councilwoman. "The result over two years is not six visions for six counties, but one vision for Southern California.'

The project covers the 187 cities of Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura counties, a region of more than 38,000 square miles and 17 million residents.

SCAG devised the plan after realizing the region's traffic and air quality would worsen under the current development model. The agency spent \$2 million and hired a consultant team to create the region's first comprehensive regional growth plan.

During 13 community workshops, planners asked residents to place stickers on giant maps of Southern California to pinpoint where new homes, jobs and mass transit could go.

Officials say they hope to have much of the new plan in place by 2010, although the "visions' aim to work for the next 30 years.

One part of the plan focuses on redeveloping high-density areas.

"They are exciting redevelopment projects,' Longville said. "Bringing residents a new urbanism is something that people are asking for. Because of traffic, it's hard to get anywhere so we might as well give them what they want at home.'

Some of the strategies include expanding rail and subway links, creating mixed-use development of centers and transportation corridors and preserving open land.

To create mixed-use areas, officials suggested building lofts above businesses and transportation facilities with more than one mode of transit to choose from.

"Years ago, we looked at land use as either/or, industrial or residential,' Longville said. "But now, as we'll see, it can be compatible.'

The Historic Santa Fe Depot is a good location for mixed-use transportation and areas along Highland and Baseline avenues are perfect for redevelopment, she said.

"We redeveloped (the city of Brea's) downtown town homes, lofts and there's people who want that,' said Bev Perry, the chair of SCAG's Growth Visioning Committee and a Brea councilwoman. "For a first home or young people that want something exciting it's not for everyone, but with this you have choices.

"With 6.3 million people coming, they have to have somewhere to go. The prices are going sky high, and we have to make use of the land we've got. This plan also calls for growth in Palmdale, Lancaster and Victorville those people want that.'

Increasing the supply of housing may help bring down or at least stabilize prices, said John Fregonese, the project's urban

planner and lead consultant.

Officials said the next step will be to ask for proposals and work with cities to see how to begin individual projects.

The overall project is composed of four main principles: mobility, livability, prosperity and sustainability.

"We'll be monitoring the success what's working, what's not working,' Fregonese said. "If it's not exactly as we vision with Compass, we'll have something just as good.'

For more info visit www.socalcompass.org

Staff writer Kerry Cavanaugh contributed to this article.